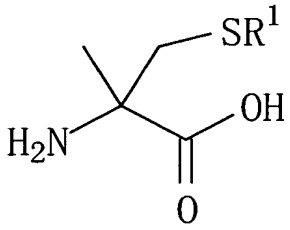
AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

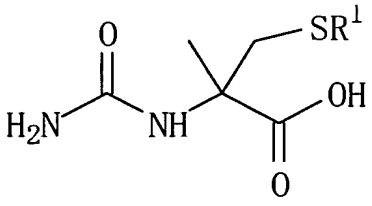
LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (original): A process for producing a racemic or optically active α-methylcysteine derivative represented by general formula (2):



(2)

(wherein R^1 represents a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl group having 1 to 20 carbon atoms, a substituted or unsubstituted aralkyl group having 7 to 20 carbon atoms, or a substituted or unsubstituted aryl group having 6 to 20 carbon atoms), the process comprising a step of hydrolyzing a racemic or optically active N-carbamyl-α-methylcysteine derivative represented by general formula (1):



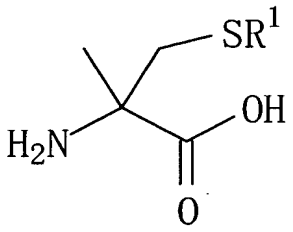
(1)

(wherein R^1 is as defined above) by treating with decarbamylase.

2. (original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the N-carbamyl-α-methylcysteine derivative (1) and the resultant α-methylcysteine derivative (2) are optically active.

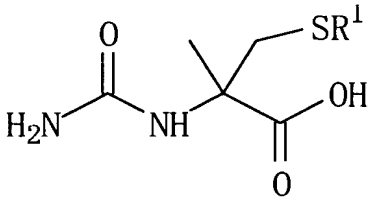
3. (original): The process according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the N-carbamyl-α-methylcysteine derivative (1) and the resultant α-methylcysteine derivative (2) are L-isomers.

4. (original): A process for producing an optically active α-methylcysteine derivative represented by general formula (2):



(2)

(wherein R^1 represents a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl group having 1 to 20 carbon atoms, a substituted or unsubstituted aralkyl group having 7 to 20 carbon atoms, or a substituted or unsubstituted aryl group having 6 to 20 carbon atoms) and an optically active N-carbamyl-α-methylcysteine derivative having a configuration opposite to that of the compound, the process comprising a step of stereoselectively hydrolyzing a racemic N-carbamyl-α-methylcysteine derivative represented by general formula (1):



(1)

(wherein R^1 is as defined above) by treating with decarbamylase.

5. (original): The process according to claim 4, wherein the resultant α-methylcysteine derivative (2) is an L-isomer.

6.(currently amended) The process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1 or 4, wherein the decarbamylase is derived from microorganisms belonging to genus Agrobacterium, Rhizobium, or Pseudomonas.

7.(currently amended) The process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1 or 4, wherein the decarbamylase is derived from Agrobacterium sp. KNK712 (FERM BP-1900), Rhizobium sp. KNK1415 (FERM BP-4419), or Pseudomonas sp. KNK003A (FERM BP-3181).

8.(currently amended) The process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1 or 4, wherein the decarbamylase is derived from Escherichia coli HB101 (pNT4553) (FERM BP-4368).

9.(currently amended) The process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 8~~ claim 1 or 4, wherein the decarbamylase is used in the form of an immobilized enzyme.

10.(currently amended) The process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1 or 4, wherein R^1 is a substituted or unsubstituted tertiary alkyl group having 4 to 15 carbon atoms.

11. (currently amended): The process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1 or 4, wherein R^1 is a tert-butyl group.